

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 0556

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORS, SHUM, SOCI, SREF, BY

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL DANGER TO RETURNING HUTUS

REF STATE 176890

1. CURRENT SITUATION IN BURUNDI WITH REGARD TO HUTUS IS QUIET, AND THERE ARE NO RPT NO SPECIAL SIGNS OF RACIAL TENSION. WE CONTINUE TO RECEIVE RANDOM BITS OF INFORMATION INDICATING THAT SOME HUTUS ARE PROGRESSING THROUGH THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, EVEN INTO THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL (THOUGH, OF COURSE, IN A RATIO VERY MUCH BELOW THEIR SHARE OF POPULATION). THIS OBSERVATION, HOWEVER, DOES NOT ANSWER QUESTION POSED REFTEL ABOUT A HUTU WITH AN AMERICAN EDUCATION AND WITH A WIFE WHOSE FORMERLY PROMINENT HUTU BROTHER WAS APPARENTLY EXECUTED IN 1972.

2. AS GUIDE TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SPECIAL PROBLEM OF ZACHARIA RUCINTANGO, WE HAVE CONSULTED TWO LOCAL SOURCES, ONE A MODERATE TUTSI, AND THE OTHER A MIDDLE-LEVEL HUTU CIVIL SERVANT. THEIR VIEWS ARE COMPLEMENTARY RATHER THAN CONTRADICTORY, BUT THEY ADD UP TO A JUDGMENT THAT REFUGEE STATUS IS PROBABLY JUSTIFIED.

3. THE HUTU OFFICIAL, WHO WAS ABROAD DURING THE 1972 EVENTS, SAID THAT RUMORS ABOUT HIS SYMPATHIES FOR THE HUTU REBELS CIRCULATED AT THAT TIME, BUT THAT HE DECIDED TO RETURN TO BURUNDI AND CLEAR HIS NAME. HE DID THIS, WITH THE HELP BOTH

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OF HIGH TUTSI CONNECTIONS AND OF HIS OWN KNOWN PRIOR STAND THAT

HUTUS CAN HOPE TO GAIN POSITION AND INFLUENCE IN BURUNDI ONLY THROUGH GRADUAL EVOLUTION, NOT RPT NOT THROUGH REVOLT. IN HIS NEW JOB IN BUJUMBURA, HE BECAME KNOWN PERSONALLY TO THE PRESIDENT AND NOW FEELS NO RPT NO CONCERN. HOWEVER, HE SCRUPULOUSLY STAYS OUT OF DISCUSSIONS WITH TUTSIS ON POLITICAL AND ETHNIC QUESTIONS, AND HE FEELS THAT THIS WOULD ALSO BE SINE QUA NON FOR RUCINTANGO. HE DOES NOT RPT NOT BELIEVE LATTER WOULD BE ARBITRARILY PERSECUTED, BUT HE IS SURE RUCINTANGO AND WIFE WOULD BE CAREFULLY INTERROGATED AFTER THEIR RETURN, ESPECIALLY ON THEIR POSSIBLE PAST ASSOCIATIONS WHILE ABROAD WITH HUTU EXILE GROUPS. HE WOULD NOT RPT NOT ESTIMATE RUCINTANGO'S JOB PROSPECTS IN BURUNDI, SINCE THE HIGH LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT FOR EDUCATED PEOPLE EXISTS FOR EVERYONE, AND SINCE IT WOULD THEREFORE BE DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHETHER SPECIAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST RUCINTANGO WERE BEING PRACTICED. HE SUGGESTS THAT RUCINTANGO MIGHT FIRST TEST THE ATMOSPHERE VIA INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH BURUNDI EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON.

4. OUR TUTSI SOURCE AGREED THAT RUCINTANGO AND WIFE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO BURUNDI. HOWEVER, HE THOUGHT NOT RPT NOT ONLY THAT THEY WOULD BE SUBJECT TO INVESTIGATION, BUT ALSO THAT THEY WOULD VERY PROBABLY BE HARASSED OFF AND ON BY THE AUTHORITIES, AS WELL AS DEPRIVED OF WHATEVER JOB OPPORTUNITIES MAY EXIST. HE ADDED THAT IF RUCINTANGO HAD SOME INFLUENTIAL TUTSI PROTECTOR (AS DOES THE ABOVE QUOTED CIVIL SERVANT), MATTERS WOULD NATURALLY TURN OUT MUCH BETTER.

5. IN THIS REGARD, OUR VISA FILES INDICATE THAT RUCINTANGO WAS SPONSORED BY AN AMERICAN MISSIONARY GROUP (FREE METHODISTS) IN 1969, AFTER FINISHING HIGH SCHOOL AT THE GROUP'S FACILITIES. WHILE MISSIONARIES ARE NOT RPT NOT BEING BOTHERED AT PRESENT BY THE REGIME, WE KNOW THAT THERE IS ALWAYS LATENT SUSPICION IN SOME OFFICIAL TUTSI MINDS (ESPECIALLY IN THE INTERIOR MINISTRY) THAT AMERICAN PROTESTANT PASTORS ARE FUNDAMENTALLY PRO HUTU. THUS, POST-RETURN INTERROGATION OF RUCINTANGO WOULD CERTAINLY FOCUS ON THIS MISSIONARY-RELATED PAST, AS WELL AS ON HIS ASSOCIATIONS WHILE ABROAD WITH OTHER BURUNDI (AND PERHAPS RWANDAN) HUTUS IN THE U.S. OR EUROPE. IF RUCINTANGO HAS STUDIED THEOLOGY IN U.S. OR WOULD ENGAGE IN SOME RELIGIOUS MINISTRY IN CONFIDENTIAL

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BURUNDI ON RETURN, AUTHORITIES MIGHT BE DOUBLY ANXIOUS ABOUT POSSIBILITY THAT HE MIGHT BE SPREADING IDEAS OF HUTU RESURGENCE AND SECRETLY ORGANIZING SOME NEW MOVEMENT. GENERALIZED REGIME SUSPICIONS OF THINGS AMERICAN WOULD NOT RPT NOT HELP RUCINTANGO EITHER.

6. AFTER WEIGHING FOREGOING CONSIDERATIONS, WE CONCLUDE THAT RUCINTANGO WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY SUFFER SOME DISADVANTAGE IF

HE RETURNED TO BURUNDI. WHETHER THIS WOULD DEGENERATE INTO
OUTRIGHT PERSECUTION AND ARREST IS DIFFICULT TO SAY, WITHOUT KNOW-
ING MORE OF FACTS ABOUT HIS PAST, HIS WIFE'S POLITICAL PAST, AND
THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES WHILE IN THE U.S. HOWEVER, THE
POSSIBILITY OF HARASSMENT AND PERSECUTION DOES EXIST, AND ONCE THE
RUCINTANGOS WERE BACK IN BURUNDI, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO RESCUE
THEM IF THIS BECAME NECESSARY. I SHOULD THINK THAT THESE
CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD PROVIDE A SUFFICIENT BASIS FOR THE I.N.S. TO
CONCLUDE THAT THE RISK OF HARM IS REAL ENOUGH TO MERIT GRANTING
ASYLUM.
MARK

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